

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DEAE-00 SNM-02 AID-05 CIAE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 EB-07 FAA-00 DOTE-00 CAB-05 /037 W

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R 141804Z OCT 76

FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8014

UNCLAS MEXICO 13158

PASS/ALSO DEA AND AID FOR SER/INC

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SNAR MX

SUBJ: HELICOPTER XC-BEM CRASH

REF: MEXICO 12888

1. HELICOPTER MODEL 212, XC-BEM, SERIAL NUMBER 30751, MICROFOIL SPAY CONFIGURED, CRASHED DURING SPRAYING MISSION SOUTH OF OAXACA CITY. ACCIDENT OCCURED APPROXIMATELY NOON ON 6 OCT 76. PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION AND CRASH DAMAGE SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED 7 OCT 76 BY BELL TECHNICAL TEAM REPRESENTATIVE JIM WOOD.

2. PRELIMINARY REPORT INDICATES BELL 212 /:-BEM DEPARTED OAXACA WITH 1,000 LBS OF FUEL, 300 GALLONS OF CHEMICAL (2400 LBS), AND CREW OF FOUR, PILOT CAPTAIN PAZ, PILOT-TRAINEE CAPTAIN LOPES, AND TWO FEDERAL AGENTS. FLYING TIME TO THE SPRAY AREA WAS APPROXIMATELY 30 MINUTES.

3. BRON ARRIVING IN THE SPARY AREA AND DURING THE FIRST SPRAY RUN WITH CAPTAIN LOPES FLYING, ONE ENGINE FAILED. CAPTAIN PAZ TOOK CONTROL OF THE AIRCRAFT AND, USING ALL CORRECT EMERGENCY PROCEDURES (WHICH HE HAD REVIEWED PREVIOUS WEEK WITH FLIGHT UNCLASSIFIED

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STANDARDS/SAFETY INSTRUCTOR DANIEL CARSON) "BEEPED"

THE REMAINING GOOD ENGINE TO FULL POWER AND EXECUTED A 180 DEGREE TURN OUT OF A BOX CANYON. THE GROSS WEIGHT OF THE AIRCRAFT AT THIS TIME WAS APPROXIMATELY 10,300 LBS AT AN ALTITUDE OF 5,200 FEET ABOVE SEA LEVEL AND OUTSIDE AIR TEMPERATURE OF 23 DEGREES DENTIGRADE. UNDER THESE CONDITIONS, THE AIRCRAFT WAS NOT CAPABLE OF MAINTAINING LEVEL FLIGHT AND A CONTROLLED CRASH WAS MADE TO AN AREA OF FEWER OBSTRUCTION.

4. THE AIRCRAFT IMPACTED UPRIGHT AND THEN ROLLED ON THE LEFT HAND SIDE. ONE MAIN ROTOR BLADE ENTERED THE COCKPIT, STRIKING THE PILOT, CAPTAIN PAZ, ON THE HELMET. TRAINING PILOT LOPES EXPERIENCED TORN LIGAMENTS IN HIS LEFT KNEE. NO FURTHER INJURIES WERE REPORTED AND BOTH CAPTAINS PAZ AND LOPES ARE REPORTED TO BE IN GOOD HEALTH.

5. MR. WOOD REPORTS THAT BOTH THE AIRCRAFT AND SPRAY EQUIPMENT ARE REPAIRABLE. INITIAL INVESTIGATION REVEALS DAMAGED COMPARABLE TO THAT OF XC-BET WHICH CRASHED IN SAN JOSE AREA, 29 MARCH 76.

6. COMMENT: THE MICROFOIL SPRAY SYSTEM DOES NOT HAVE EMERGENCY CHEMICAL DUMP VALVES. HAD XC-BEM BEEN EQUIPPED WITH THESE VALVES, AND ASSUMING SUFFICIENT TIME TO EXECUTE AND EMERGENCY DUMP (ONLY FOUR OR FIVE SECONDS SHOULD BE REQUIRED), THIS AIRCRAFT WOULD HAVE HAD THE CAPABILITY TO CLIMB AT A RATE OF 450 FEET PER MINUTE AS OPPOSED TO THE 150 FEET PER MINUTE DESCENT TO WHICH IT WAS COMMITTED. (SEE BELL 212 PILOT'S HANDBOOK). THESE VALVES HAVE BEEN ORDERED AND MODIFICATION TESTS WILL BE INITIATED AS SOON AS THEY ARRIVE.

7. INSPECTION OF FUEL FILTERS, BOOST PUMPS, AND CONTROLS AT CRASH SITE INDICATE NO RPT NO FUEL CONTAMINATION.

8. PLANS ARE TO INITIATE RECOVERY OF XC-BEM ON MONDAY, UNCLASSIFIED

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18 OCT 76. ONCE THE AIRCRAFT AND COMPONENTS HAVE BEEN RETURNED TO MEXICO CITY, A COMPLETE TEARDOWN ANALYSIS AND REPAIR ESTIMATE WILL BE ACCOMPLISHED. JOVA

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: HELICOPTERS, AIRCRAFT ACCIDENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 14 OCT 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976MEXICO13158
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760387-0168
From: MEXICO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761053/aaaabtvj.tel
Line Count: 111
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 MEXICO 12888
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ullricre
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 06 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <06 APR 2004 by DuboseBM>; APPROVED <06 JAN 2005 by ullricre>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: HELICOPTER XC-BEM CRASH
TAGS: SNAR, MX
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006